

REMARKS

By the present amendment, claims 26 to 42 are pending in the application.

Claims 26, 27, 37 and 38 are independent claims.

Support For Claims

Claim 26

New independent claim 26 is a combination of original independent claim 3 and dependent claims 9 and 10.

Claim 27

New independent claim 27 is a combination of original independent claim 4 and dependent claims 9 and 10.

Claims 28 to 30

New claims 28 to 30 correspond to original claims 5 to 7, respectfully.

Claims 31 to 41

New claims 31 to 42 correspond to original claims 12 to 23, respectfully.

Restriction Requirement

The claims of Group I, i.e., method claims 1 to 23, were elected for further prosecution in this application.

It is submitted that new claims 26 to 42 correspond to the elected method claims of elected Group I.

Non-elected claims 24 and 25 have been canceled by the present amendment without prejudice to the filing of a divisional application directed to the subject matter of non-elected claims 24 and 25.

Claim Objections

Claims 6 to 17 and 21 to 23 were objected to under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c) as being in improper multiple dependent form.

Claims 6 to 17 and 21 to 23 have been canceled by the present amendment.

It is submitted that the multiple dependent claims of the present amendment are in proper multiple dependent form.

It is therefore respectfully requested that the objection to the claims under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c) be withdrawn.

§102/§103

Claims 1 to 3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by WO/142516 which corresponds to U.S. Patent No. 6,755,888 to Ibaraki et al.

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over WO/142516.

Claims 1 to 4 and 18 to 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan No. 2002-194452 in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,873,925 to Rinker et al. The rejection over JP '452 was based upon a machine translation to English.

Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan No. 2002-194452 in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,873,925 to Rinker et al. and further in view of Pickles (1997).

These rejections, as applied to new claims 26 to 41 of the present amendment, are respectfully traversed.

The Present Invention

The present invention, as defined in the new claims, provides a method of reduction treatment of metal oxides characterized by using as a feed material a mixed powder

of a powder containing both iron oxide and zinc oxide and/or lead oxide and a powder containing carbon and containing alkali metals and halogen elements in a ratio alkali/(zinc + lead) between a total of the number of moles of alkali salts and a total of the number of moles of lead of at least 0.1, mixing the feed material with water to produce a slurry having a pH of 7 to 11.5, then dehydrating this, and charging the dehydrated material into a rotary hearth type reduction furnace for reduction.

Patentability

None of the cited references, alone or in combination, i.e., WO/142516 (US '888), Japan No. 2002-194452, U.S. Patent No. 5,873,925, and/or Pickles (1997) disclose or suggest the characteristic feature of the present invention that a mixed powder of a powder containing both iron oxide and zinc oxide and/or lead oxide and a powder containing carbon and containing alkali metals and halogen elements in a ratio alkali/(zinc + lead) between a total of the number of moles of alkali salts and a total of the number of moles of lead of at least 0.1, and mixing said feed material with water to produce a slurry having a pH of 7 to 11.5.

It is therefore submitted that new claims 26 to 42 of the present amendment are patentable over the cited prior art of record.

CONCLUSION

It is submitted that in view of the present amendment and the foregoing remarks, the application is now in condition for allowance. It is therefore respectfully requested that the application be allowed and passed for issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: March 4, 2008

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